superior corrosion resistance and strength, had come down resulting in under-utlisation of capacity for manufacrtue of this grade of steel at Alloy Steel Plant/SAIL.

As a resule, ASP/SAIL have had to seek alternative markets for this grade of steel. After ascertaining, that similar grades of steel are being extensively used in other countris for manufacture of garbage countainers, in thermal industry and in coal industry, SAIL has supplied five containers to Calcutta Municipal Corporation as a trial lot. Further discussions are also going on with the Bombay Municipal Corporation for a similar order.

(d) The question of diversion of costly material does not arise. As the Railways are not lifting this material in sufficient quantity for manufacture of wagons, ASP/SAIL will have to continuously seek new, alternative markets for promoting this grade of steel in order to utilise full available capacity.

Mini Steel Plants

1827. SHRI P. UPENDRA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of mini steel plants in the country incurring losses and many remain closed;

(b) what are the reasons for the mini steel industry becoming sick; and

(c) what steps Government are taking to revive the sick units?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) to (c) There are at present 181 Electric Are Furnace (EAF) units. These units are primarily in the private sector. The EAF industry is characterised by a predominance of small sized furnaces which are not able to adopt modern technological features. Coupled with this, labour, financial and managerial problems faced by these units led to the closure of a number of units over a period of time, and as on 31-12-94, 89 units were reported to be closed. In addition, their performance has been adversely affected by the rise in the international prices of scrap, which constitutes their basic raw material, and other factors like high power tariff.

Government has reduced the import duty on steel melting scrap from 12.5 percent to 5 percent to improve the performance of the EAF units.

State Governments have been advised to consider supplying uninterrpted power to these units, at concessional rates.

In addition, Office of Development Commissioner of Iron & Steel has set up a "Core Group" to assist those of the units which are interested in drawing up revival strategies.

Hindustan Steel Construction Limited

1828. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) what was the manpower of Hindustan Steel Construction Ltd. during the period 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(b) whether it is a fact that 5000 workers of HSCL are likely to be declared surplus; and

(c) if so, the reason thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) The man-power in Hindustan Steelworks Construction Limited (HSCL) as on 31.3.1993 and 31.3.1994 was 18381 and 16726 respectively.

(b) and (c) Keeping in view the present order booking position and nature of its activities, present manpower of HSCL is considered to be high. Voluntary Retirement Scheme has been under operation since 1988 as reduction in establishment cost would help improve the financial position of HSCL is a lose making company.